



Working *Together*

Summer/Fall 2004



A Message from the Director

Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers, Veterans and Friends of the VAPHS,

As Fiscal Year 2004 fades into the distance, I would like to reflect on just a few of the many significant accomplishments we have achieved over the past year. Above all, our most significant accomplishment is that we have continued to provide the highest level of health care to veterans, while expanding services and clinical programs, and continuing to renovate space to always provide modern care that is second to none. We can all be proud that the number of unique patients and outpatient visits has continued to expand.



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The VA Pittsburgh **Working Together** is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. To submit articles, editorials, letters or story ideas for possible inclusion, please contact **David Cowgill** at 412-688-6224 or via e-mail: david.cowgill@med.va.gov

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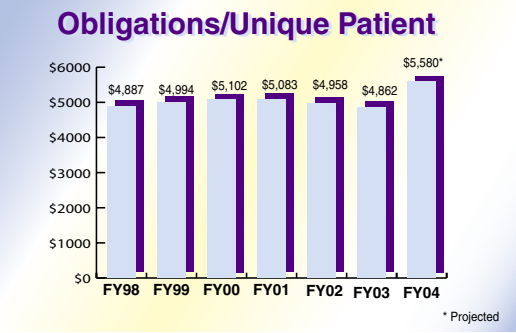
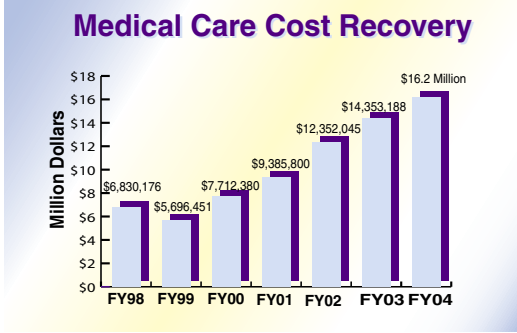
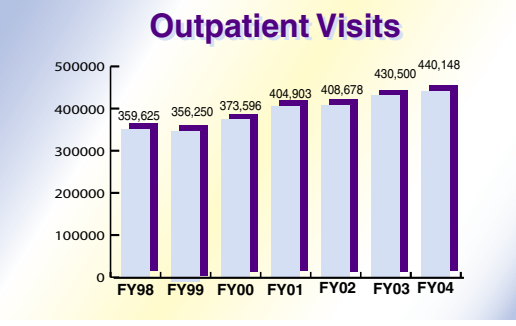
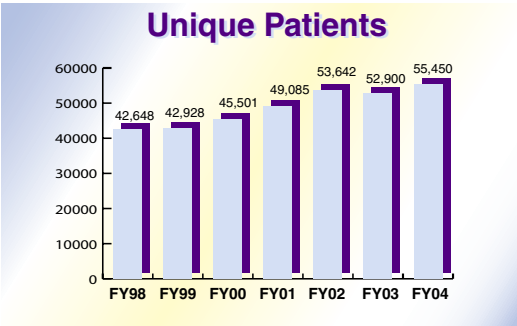
We have had so many great accomplishments this year that it is hard to narrow them down. I wanted to share what I feel were our Top Ten accomplishments with you now. Watch for our 2004 Annual Report that will come out later this year to read about all our major accomplishments.

1. \$200 million major construction project for the University Drive and Heinz divisions approved and initiated
2. Independent liver and kidney transplant program established
3. Palliative care unit established
4. Additional telemetry capacity added
5. Added digital radiography
6. Nuclear medicine capacity added
7. Renovation of inpatient psychiatry and specialty clinics, including hematology/oncology
8. Operating rooms renovated
9. Homemaker/home health aid program expanded
10. Additional adult day health care capacity added

This Summer/Fall issue of Working Together features an article on the Eden Alternative, our Performance Vital Signs, the success of our GIP Program, information on our Employee Mass Transit Benefit, and a wrap-up of our Emergency Medical Response Team's annual training. It also spotlights the many outstanding achievements and awards that our staff has received in the past quarter.

Michael E. Moreland
Director

Performance Vital Signs



Multimillion Dollar Construction Projects Awarded at VAPHS

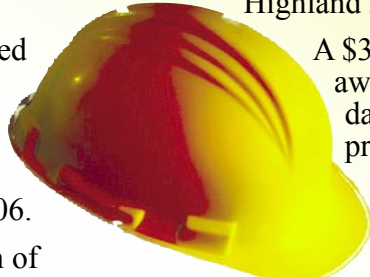
Two \$3.2 million construction projects have been initiated at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, as the veterans health care system continues to improve state-of-the-art care.

A \$3.2 million project has been awarded to renovate approximately 15,000 square feet on the fourth floor of University Drive. This construction is expected to begin in September and is expected to be complete by Spring 2006.

The first phase will involve renovation of three new cardiac catheterization laboratories, one of which will be designed and equipped for Electrophysiology procedures. The project will also include a recovery area, patient preparatory area, and improved office space. The second phase

will result in a consolidated eight-bed, state-of-the-art Sleep Lab that will replace a two-bed unit at the University Drive Division and three-bed unit at the Highland Drive Division.

A \$320,000 design project has been awarded for the design of a consolidated data center, a \$3.2 million construction project that will be built later. Design began in August and the construction contract will be awarded next summer. Currently computer resources and operation centers are distributed between the three divisions of the VAPHS. This data center will consolidate all hospital information system servers and associated peripheral hardware from three sites to a single site at the Heinz Division.



VAPHS Director of Transplantation is Finalist for Prestigious National Award

The 2004 Service to America Medals finalists were announced on June 16 on Capitol Hill and praised for their dedication to the federal civil service. Dr. Thomas V. Cacciarelli was a finalist for the Social Services Medal.

Dr. Cacciarelli has been a transplant surgeon at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System since 1999 and the Director of Transplantation since 2002. Dr. Cacciarelli resigned from the University of Pittsburgh to accept a full time appointment as a transplant surgeon at the VAPHS so that he could facilitate the VAPHS becoming the first VA Medical Center to have an independent United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) Charter for Transplantation. He has demonstrated genuine dedication to the advancement of solid organ

transplantation at the VAPHS and throughout the VA. He has performed more than 50 organ transplants since joining the VAPHS. During one recent weekend, he performed three organ donor procedures and three liver transplants, entailing more than 42 hours of surgery in three days.



Eden Alternative Revolutionizes Dementia Specialty Care

On the ground floor of the H. John Heinz III Progressive Care Center of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, a revolutionary change in dementia patient care has begun. The change is being undertaken with the guidance of a modern philosophy called the Eden Alternative.

A Harvard-trained doctor, William H. Thomas, proposed the Eden Alternative a couple of years ago. Dr. Thomas suggested looking at nursing homes as a community, instead of an institution or a nursing unit. As VAPHS' Dr. Frederick Kier explains, The Eden Alternative encourages putting the "home" in "nursing home." Prior to the initiation of this philosophy, such units were focused more on nursing than providing a home for patients.

The core concept of the Eden Alternative is to eliminate the plagues of boredom, hopelessness, frustration and loneliness among elderly patients. The Eden Alternative reinforces the importance of close contact with living things; people need people and relationships make life worth living.

Dr. Frederick Kier, geropsychologist and Mary Lou Niebauer, nurse manager, are leading the change as Eden Alternative Associates. Eden Alternative Associates are people who have completed a three to four day training in the principles and practices of the Eden Alternative. During the training, Dr. Kier and Ms. Niebauer were taught the Ten Principles of the Eden Alternative and given specific suggestions and guidelines for putting them into practice. When they returned to Heinz in March of this year, they began sharing what they learned and working to implement these innovative ideas on the Dementia Specialty Care Unit. The Eden Alternative was developed more for a nursing home than a dementia unit, so some alterations have had to be made to accommodate the veteran patients on this unit, said Dr. Kier. However, the ultimate goal is the same: Give patients the opportunity to make as many choices as they are capable of doing.



Shane, a 10-month-old lab mix, has quickly become a popular resident on the unit.

The changes become evident at the front door of the unit. In fact, the front door has been moved to create more space on the unit. An activity room has been added and is now furnished with a wall mural, player piano, basketball arcade game, and a multi-game table that features pool, foosball, and more. Crafts are encouraged and patients show off their creativity.

Drapes are now left open to let in sunlight and shine through sun catchers hanging in windows. Staff are being trained to lead reminiscing groups to stimulate patients' minds. Reminiscing is encouraged because dementia patients still have the ability to access their long-term memories.

Plants are located throughout the unit, including the nurses' station and an outdoor patio and garden area. Patients take responsibility for watering, weeding, and caring for the plants. Also on the nurses' station sit the "unit mascots," Milo and Otis, Beta fish. The dining room doors are now left open all the time to create more space on the unit and give the patients an additional place to go. Music – from live bands or the player piano – from the older patients' era brings additional life to the unit. Additional music therapy from religious music and a music therapist brightens their day. One patient is even slowly learning how to play the piano. Using music to reach patients has been very successful. Patients can use music to communicate and be taken back to their youth.

As Ms. Niebauer explains, many people are afraid that on a unit with dementia patients, ceramic planters and fish tanks are a danger. But the DSCU at Heinz has proved the opposite to be true.

Dr. Kier, Ms. Niebauer, and fellow staff are striving to create a residence where veteran patients can live and thrive (with appropriate supervision). Care is more personalized and families are encouraged to be as involved as possible.

Activities have been encouraged more and made more available under the Eden philosophy. There are afternoon and evening scheduled activities, as well as unscheduled activities. Surprises are encouraged more under this new philosophy. Off-station field trips have also been instituted, such as going to Pirate games. Monthly birthday celebrations are held for patients and staff. The unit is privileged to accept more visitors, including schoolchildren and musicians.

Formerly, bedtime routines on the DSCU were rigid and did not take any patient input into consideration. Now these veterans get to decide when they are ready for sleep. With this rigidity eliminated, there is more of an opportunity for nighttime activities. More focus is placed on individual bathing. Part of the implementation process has included changing the mentality of staff from a medical model, which works well in hospitals. However, some of these dementia patients live on this unit for years. The nursing staff on the DSCU has embraced the changes.

One of the most important aspects of the Eden Alternative is interaction with living things. The goal is to eventually have two dogs living on the unit full-time to provide companionship for these 40 patients. As with all changes, it is important to implement this gradually so the patients can adjust more easily. Ms. Niebauer has adopted a 10-month-old lab mix named Shane from the Animal Rescue in West Hamilton. Shane has been spending from two to five days a week on the unit getting used to the atmosphere and getting to know the patients. Nurses describe patients as embracing and loving this new friend. As Jennifer Scott, clinical manager, describes, "They try to give us their Canteen books to buy him food so that he can stay." When Shane receives therapy certification he will begin living on the unit full-time.

A support group for caregivers has also been implemented so that patients' families can offer input and suggestions. Staff also administers a patient satisfaction survey through their families. The recreation area is available for families who want to have celebrations on the unit to include the hospitalized loved one.

Aromatherapy is also utilized to stimulate patients. Ms. Niebauer describes using a bread machine to bake bread and then offering patients an array of jams and jellies to try on the bread after it is finished baking.

All staff on the unit are quick to describe and praise the changes that have taken place since the Eden implementation. Patients who used to be flat are now quick to become totally engaged in conversation.

An additional positive change that has taken place is the minimization of medications. Under the direction of Dr. Bonnie Hubicz, team physician,

Members of the Eden Team work together to provide the best possible care for dementia patients in a home-like environment. Pictured Left to Right: Regina Santi, Susan Lipinski, Mary Lou Niebauer, Dr. Bonnie Hubicz, and Heather Korpa.



patients are only given the least amount of appropriate medications and are weaned off whatever medications possible. These decisions are made with the collaborative effort of all staff. The DSCU now has the lowest average number of medications per patient than any other unit in the facility.

The success of the project has depended on the trust and teamwork of the interdisciplinary team, which includes doctors, nursing staff, recreation staff, and more. Staff input for all aspects of patient care, from all levels of staff, are highly encouraged under the Eden Alternative. Everybody can make a difference. Communication is of the utmost importance. If managers take good care of staff, staff will take good care of patients. A higher emphasis is placed on education and the utilization of computers.

The construction and changes are ongoing. As Dr. Kier describes, "There are 500 changes I'd like to make, only 30 have been made so far." A local artist has recently started to paint a mural on a wall of the activity room. A bird sanctuary has been donated and will be placed on the unit soon. The goal of the unit is to become a Center of Excellence. The goal of the Heinz Division is to implement the Eden Alternative throughout the entire facility.

Since the implementation of this philosophy, falls on the unit have decreased 30% and assaults have decreased by 50%

Dr. Frederick Kier (right) joins a patient feeding the tropical fish



Dave Jefferson, an LPN on the DSCU, juggles frequently to entertain patients.



Photos by Glenn Hangard

Dear Mr. Moreland,

After a lengthy and quite serious medical stay in UPMC Presbyterian in February, my brother (P.S.) was transferred to your John Heinz facility.

I wish to extend my highest compliments to you and the staff at Heinz. P.'s recovery needs were extensive. The staff not only met P.'s needs, but exceeded in kindness, patience and understanding they extended to him and to us. At all times were we kept informed of P.'s progress, or lack of it, and we were offered alternatives to insure that a high level of rehabilitative care was maintained. We had the opportunity to attend a family/patient progress team meeting and were truly impressed with the involvement each team member had. Dr. Jaffe was most helpful in helping us to understand P.'s prognosis and was available for any questions we had and Sue Pataky, LCSW, has been an ongoing support to us above and beyond expectations. And we appreciated it.

After my brother's release, he unfortunately finds himself once more in a critical health situation, currently on a ventilator in Armstrong Hospital. We feel so strongly about the quality of care he has received in your care, that we have requested for P. to be transferred back into your system as soon as he is stable and can be safely transported. His life span has been severely shortened, and we have requested that he will be able to be returned to John Heinz Center, possibly into the Geriatric Palliative Care Unit, where he will receive not only quality care, but will be surrounded by staff that treat patients with dignity and respect. We have seen this for ourselves.

We feel the staff at the John Heinz Center deserves special recognition, as they have been caring, professional and patient even in difficult moments with my brother. Please feel free to share our compliments and appreciation with them.

Sincerely, E.M. (Sister)



Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans Care & Share

Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans, James Fair and Jeremy Feldbusch with their families and John Ciak, VIST Coordinator, enjoy the Sharing & Caring Boat Ride on September 9, 2004. Jeremy, from Blairsville, PA, was wounded in March 2003 and James, from Lawrenceville, PA, was wounded in November 2003. They are both Army veterans and both were blinded in Iraq. They met for the first time on the boat ride and enjoyed a fun-filled afternoon.



Dear Mr. Moreland,

From where you are sitting, I'll bet you do not get many letters to praise the hospital you manage and the people who work for you! I would like to change that as of now to say thank you for providing a stop smoking cessation program for us vets, and to thank you for assuring that you hired a great bunch of people to work for you. That's a big long statement so I'll break it down.

First, you budgeted out the funds to start the cessation/addiction to drugs, etc. program and then hired people like Lola Wells to conduct the program. Well, I did need help to stop smoking as I have used tobacco since I was 13 or 14 years old. I tried stopping many times and everything failed. I knew I needed help and finally learned of the drug/smoking addiction classes. I asked my primary care physician to enroll me and he did. I started the classes with Ms. Wells, have now as of last week completed the twelve week course and I feel I'm really on my way to stop smoking. I have not had a cigarette in over five weeks. To me, that's incredible and thanks to your program I'm hopefully continuing to think I can leave the cigarettes alone.

Thank you Mr. Moreland and thanks to Lola Wells for administering the program.

Sincerely Yours, AJD

To the Doctors and Staff of Urology and the Doctors and Staff of Same Day Surgery:

I want to take this time to thank all of you for the excellent treatment that you afforded me during my appointments, and operation—hydrocelectomy on July 21, 2004.

I have been at quite a few hospitals in my life, but the kindness and consideration you afforded me during this time made me feel that my service to our country actually meant something.

Once again, thank you all, and keep up the good work. It is appreciated.

Sincerely, TWD

Spotlight On Dr. Alison Peterson

New Program Leader, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service



Dr. Alison Peterson was recently appointed as the Program Leader for the Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service. In this position, she is responsible for physiatry, physical therapy and occupational therapy services.

Dr. Peterson has been at the VA for nine years. She began her career with the VA at the Highland Drive VAMC where she was chief of the physical medicine & rehabilitation services prior to the consolidation.

Dr. Peterson has an MD degree from SUNY Buffalo and is board certified in both neurology and physical medicine & rehabilitation.

Congratulations Employees with 20 years or more of service!

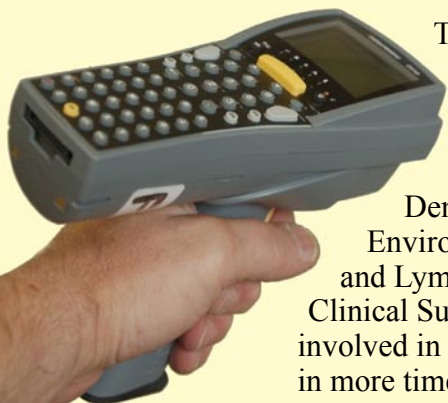
The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period **June 1, 2004 - October 1, 2004.**

Name	Service Line	Years	Name	Service Line	Years
Thomas J. Brown	Patient Care Services	35	Celeste J. Bateman	Critical Care	20
Gertrude G. Hamlet	Patient Care Services	35	Lois J. Brown	Medical Specialty	20
Patricia Wurgler	Surgical Specialty	35	Charles R. Clark	Behavioral Health	20
Carolyn R. Ressler	Medical Specialty	35	Larry D. Coles	Medical Specialty	20
John F. Ciak	Community Based Care	30	Nicola Capone	Facilities Management	20
Thaddeus Gilliard	Nutrition & Food Service	30	Frances K. Dannenberg	Behavioral Health	20
Ronald C. Kramer	Police	30	Daniel J. Donovan	Clinical Support	20
Robert N. Kulus	Community Based Care	30	Derek J. Dorsey	Facilities Management	20
Sharon A. McMahon	Patient Care Services	30	Colleen M. Evans	Patient Care Services	20
James M. McNeilly	Facilities Management	30	Larry R. Knaff	Facilities Management	20
Wayne E. Anderson	Facilities Management	25	James J. Manganaro, II	Surgical Specialty	20
Debra E. Bunting	Veterans Canteen Service	25	Christine A. McCartney	Clinical Support	20
Janet S. Leuthold	Business Service	25	William T. Rogerson	Business Services	20
Jacqueline Harper-Smith	AD/Operations	25	Marion L. Schmude	Business Service	20
David N. MacIntyre	Facilities Management	25	Herman Smith	Nutrition & Food Service	20
Catherine Malsch	Office of the Director	25	Sue Anne Stanizzo	Business Service	20
Dale R. McCandless	Human Resources	25	Jeffrey Stunja	Surgical Specialty	20
Kathleen McLean	Business Services	25	Lehretta J. Wilson-Hale	Business Services	20
Dane R. Rucker	Facilities Management	25			
Keith M. Zanotti	Geriatrics & Extended Care	25			

GIP Program is a Huge Success!

The Generic Inventory Package, or GIP Program, at the VAPHS has become immensely successful. A directive from VHA ordered all VA hospitals to incorporate a GIP Program.

Glenn Hangard



The GIP Program is an inventory/ordering management program that aims to cut down on excess stock so that money can be spent more wisely. The GIP Program is under the Facilities Management Service Line and is currently responsible for inventory in Dental, Radiology, Radiation Therapy, Nuclear Medicine, Environmental Management, Surgical, Anesthesia, Laboratory and Lymphedema. Jo Petro, MS, RD, Business Manager of the Clinical Support Service said, "GIP has enabled staff to be less involved in the day-to-day inventory management concerns resulting in more time for direct patient care issues."

Annual EMRT Training

58 members of the VISN 4 Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT 4) attended its annual training May 3-7, 2004. The training was held at the Medical Company Training Site of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard at Fort Indiantown Gap in Annville, PA.

Training began with a welcome from VISN 4 Director, Ms. Cheri Szabo, who made an impression on the team with statements of how important the EMRT 4's mission and training are since September 11. EMRT 4 had 16 hours of Critical Incident Stress Management training. They visited the Air National Guard base, 193rd Special Operations Wing at Harrisburg International Airport to practice loading and unloading patients from a C-130 aircraft with a full aeromedical evacuation compliment. Fox 43 News, out of York, PA, covered this training event. EMRT 4 members were interviewed on the 10 PM news about the training and previous deployments and exercises. EMRT 4 also got a tour of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the mobile EOC vans the Pennsylvania Emergency

Management Agency (PEMA) uses in disasters. Many of the members stated it was the best training week yet with great participation by everyone.

EMRT 4 was formed in 1998 and is comprised of 102 members, all current VA employees of all disciplines, who volunteer their expertise to help out in the event of a natural disaster, mass casualty incident, and/or a nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) event. If you have any questions or interest in joining EMRT 4, please contact David Kaczmarek at (412) 365-5591 or david.kaczmarek@med.va.gov.



Warren Park

Employee Public Transportation Benefit

An Employee Mass Transit Benefit program was established at the VAPHS under the Federal Employees Clean Air Incentive Act to improve air quality and encourage federal employees to commute by means other than single-occupancy motor vehicles. It is available to all qualified VA employees and provides a transit voucher, Port Authority of Allegheny County Transit Pass, at no cost, for employees to use in their daily commute to and from work. 160 employees currently participate in the program. Employees participating in the Transit Program must relinquish their parking permits or passes. Current employees wishing to participate in the program may obtain an application package at either of the Human Resource Offices at University Drive or Highland Drive. Questions may be addressed to Joseph Wagner through e-mail or by calling (412) 365-4750.



Warren Park

Pittsburgh Healthcare System
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